

Town of Amherst
Recycling & Refuse Management Committee Meeting Minutes
August 1, 2013, DPW Conference Room, 4:30 pm

Attending: Sue Morrello, Arnie Alper, Brenda Kennedy-Davies, Craig Goff, John Root, Aaron Hayden, Susan Waite, Lucy Salwen (visitor)

Approved June 2013 and July 2013 minutes as amended.

School Composting

Susan Waite explained current composting systems at the three Amherst elementary schools. Wildwood and Fort River have commercial pickup which allows for all food waste, milk cartons and trays to be composted. Crocker Farm has on-site composting, whereby allowing for only food waste that contains no oils, meat or cheese, not food trays or milk cartons. DPW currently pays for the pickup of the organic waste from Wildwood and Fort River. Ron Bohonowitz (ARSD Facilities Director) pays for the high school pickup.

Susan met with Ron Bohonowitz, Mike Malone and Faye Brady (ARSD Director of Special Ed and Student Services) to discuss school composting. Schools have not yet accepted responsibility for the composting program's success. Faye met with all the principals at the end of the last school year and they all wanted to continue composting. The food waste ban which will go into effect in July 2014 was discussed but it is uncertain which schools will qualify for the ban (qualifying sites must produce 1 ton or more of food waste per week). We are not clear whether each school or the whole district will be counted as a single source. Susan said Cam Weimar (Amend Organics) thought individual schools might generate enough organic waste because it is heavy. Ron Bohonowitz was concerned with financial issues and would like to determine how much money (if any) is saved by composting. It is a very difficult number to pin down because TTT trucking does not have scales on their trucks to weigh material at pickup.

Years ago efforts at composting at the high school failed. Compost coaching is needed at the beginning of the year at all the elementary schools. Mike Malone, Amherst Regional Middle School Vice Principal, wants to restart the composting program at ARMS and is working to get the janitors on board. Sue and John want to meet with Maria Geryck, Amherst Public Schools superintendent.

Cam Weimar is interested in picking up the school organics, however he can't include the milk cartons. Martin's Farm now accepts milk cartons as compost.

Susan Waite has a call in to find out more about the waste ban. Guilford has mentioned to her that the ban's start date may be postponed if facilities aren't in place to receive the increased volume of organics that will be generated.

Committee needs to understand chain of command for composting in the school. Both money and janitorial support are key for school composting to be successful. Committee has some leverage because DPW pays for Fort River and Wildwood pickup.

Crocker Farm may be changing their on-site composting system. Other solutions are complicated because the custodian does not want another dumpster (vandals have used them to access the school roof).

Arnie asked if DPW could take over the compost removal process, but DPW doesn't have the requisite watertight dumpsters and dump truck.

Someone (DPW ? RRMC?) needs to develop a compost plan for town meeting that includes a budget, etc.

Transfer Station

Zero Waste Discussion: First steps composting and town recycling. Community efforts are needed to promote school composting and individual composting through the Transfer Station's pilot program. Next step would be curbside composting. What can we do to promote Transfer Station services? Promoting pay-as-you-throw.

Susan is meeting with Julie Federman to determine what the Health Department's current needs/concerns are with regard to the trash variance exemption.

Arnie asked if we could contract out our transfer station similar to the way Duseau runs their recycling center in Northampton. Susan said that they take limited items that are more profitable (trash, recycling, scrap metal & electronics), while ours is considered a full-service transfer station (automotive oil, fluorescent bulbs, yard waste, clothing, etc.).

The Town's General Fund does support the Transfer Station through administrative services such as billing and bookkeeping.

Brenda asked about the survey being fully analyzed. Susan said the majority of people wanted status quo. Some new ideas came out of the survey like a one day use fee.

Susan suggested we promote Amend Organics' composting pilot at the Transfer Station and school composting as a first step towards a pilot curbside program.

Arnie asked if there are any private businesses that will need to comply with the waste ban. Susan said restaurants that serve large numbers of meals (such as Judies) and grocers such as Big Y & Atkins would likely qualify.

One estimate of food waste tonnage is 800 to 1000 lbs per cubic yard. If the organics are less dense (e.g. mixed with paper goods) it can be between 500 to 600 lbs per cubic yard.

Arnie suggested contracting for town-wide curbside, business and municipal (schools, town buildings) trash removal. This would be a very new concept for Amherst residents because the town has not been directly involved in residential trash removal. Our system currently is “subscription service,” where individual residents contract independently with private waste haulers.

Ideas for promotion of composting were Amherst Bulletin articles about Cam Weimar/Amend Organics and new regulations on the horizon. Library is a good location to disseminate information.

Sue asked about committee member input regarding sidelining curbside pickup in order to focus on other items. This will be addressed at next meeting, where committee wants to place its focus.

Action Items and Items for next meeting

Brenda will contact Cam about a visit to his facility.

Susan will give update of Transfer Station meeting.

Trash Free Day at schools.

Susan will get sticker details for Transfer Station.